



# Central Maine Growth Council:

## Economic Recovery

## Implementation Hub

Direct Grants to Businesses & Entrepreneurs

PROGRAM GUIDANCE

CENTRAL MAINE GROWTH COUNCIL

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## I. PROGRAM SUMMARY

Central Maine Growth Council (CMGC), a public-private collaborative regional economic development partnership, with a commitment to fostering a robust regional economy, has been selected by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (MDECD) to serve as a regional hub, spearheading Maine's economic recovery. MDECD created the initiative to stimulate economic development collaboration and reduce the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this support from MDECD and its public-private partners, CMGC has established an Economic Recovery Implementation Hub (ERIH) Direct Grant program for businesses and entrepreneurs throughout Kennebec & Somerset Economic Summary Area (see Appendix A).

CMGC's Economic Recovery Implementation Hub operates under four project areas: technical assistance to small businesses, technical assistance to small businesses with a lens of racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority-owned businesses, administration of new business grants, and entrepreneurial training through Dirigo Labs.

CMGC will oversee the administration of the new business grants and deploy approximately \$708,000 in non-dilutive grant funding for new and early-stage businesses and entrepreneurs who were not able to take advantage of other economic recovery programs or who have experienced additional challenges from the ongoing adverse economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These grants will be deployed across four categories, including specifically designed funding for technology and innovation-based businesses. Grant applications for businesses and entrepreneurs will be open on **May 1st, 2023**, and accepted on a rolling basis.

## II. FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

Funding for ERIH Direct Grants comes from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), allocated through the MDECD. The administration of the ERIH Direct Grant Program will be carried out by CMGC according to the procedures and guidelines outlined in this document. The administration and operation of this program shall conform to all federal, state, and local codes.(i.e., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, re: DEI+A).

## III. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1. Four categories of ERIH Direct Grants will be offered to Businesses & Entrepreneurs:
  - (1) Small Business Growth Grants up to \$5,000.
    - (a) Example uses for microenterprise dollars include, but are not limited to prototyping, short-run MVP production, incorporation & legal costs, up-front costs for new site location/expansion, and equipment).
  - (2) Spark Enterprise Grants up to \$10,000.
    - (a) Enterprise Grants would see similar uses listed with the Small Business Growth grants above, though they would target larger projects and/or businesses that are further along in their development. (Businesses ready to scale operations, execute a long-term lease agreement, purchase of tech & equipment, etc).
  - (3) Innovation Grants \$25,000 - \$49,000
    - (a) Based on the [VIRAL Assessment](#) methodology, Innovation Grants are designed for applicants who have identified urgent needs to enable commercialization, scaling, and/or launching of their program or product. CMGC will prioritize applicants whose business has a novel or innovative methodology or product and/or businesses utilizing/creating new technologies.
  - (4) Special Project Grants \$10,000 - \$49,000
    - (a) Special Project Grants are designed to provide immediate funds for businesses looking to engage in a major project, contract, scaling goal, or capital expenditure related to space, equipment, or staffing. CMGC will prioritize projects that would create new part-time & full-time jobs.
2. Grants are available for **up to 100% of the actual or estimated cost** of the project, not to exceed the maximum awarded amount of **\$49,000**. No match is required for the ERIH Direct Grants program.
3. Business entities are eligible to receive only one award through the ERIH Grant Program.
4. If applying for funds to support an existing business, the grant applicant must be a founder or co-founder of the entity being awarded.
5. Grant Awards at any of the four funding levels will only be available to entrepreneurs and/or businesses that are established within the established geographic project performance area (see Appendix A). However, businesses that would utilize ERIH award funds to relocate or

expand into the geographic performance area are eligible. Awards would be contingent on the successful relocation/expansion.

## IV. ELIGIBILITY & FUNDING USES

1. General Eligibility Requirements: Your proposed project will be eligible for Micro-Enterprise, Enterprise, and Special Projects Grants if your proposed project or activity meets the following criteria:

- Your business has a significant presence in Maine (50% or more employees)
- Your business began engaging in operations on or after January 1, 2020
- Your business is registered with the [Maine Secretary of State's corporate registry](#)
- Your business exists in, or plans to relocate to the geographic project performance area (see Appendix A)
- You can provide monetized proof of COVID-19 impact
  - While there is no set list of acceptable documentation, the following list of examples used independently or in conjunction with other documentation, can be used to support the estimates of lost revenue or increased expenses:
    - Tax returns
    - Profit & loss statements (real or estimated)
    - Receipts for qualifying expenses
    - Balance sheets/bank statements
  - The important thing is that the documentation clearly supports the Covid-19 impact being claimed by the applicant.

Projects applying to Innovation Grants must fall within the eligible activities detailed above, and additionally:

- Your business is in one of the seven technology sectors as outlined by the state legislative mandate. For a list of these seven sectors, [click here](#).

2. Eligible Funding Uses: The below expenditures are determined to be allowable expenses and uses of funding by CMGC. This may not be a comprehensive list, organizations may suggest or request clarification on proposed uses not explicitly detailed in the list below.

- Equipment needs
  - Manufacturing; technology; communications; etc.
- Scaling

- Permitting, regulatory, licensing, and/or legal costs; Software; Distribution;
- Expansion/Relocating
  - Construction & utility costs; local operating permits and/or licenses; transportation costs;
- Research & Development
- Hiring of new staff

3. Businesses will be considered ineligible from receiving grant funding if they are engaged with the following:

- Illegal activity;
- Marijuana or cannabis related activities;
- Principally engaged in promoting religion;
- Primarily engaged in political or lobbying activities;
- A private club that limits the number of memberships for reasons other than capacity or a business that restricts patronage.

## V. APPLICATION PROCESS & REQUIRED MATERIALS

***To apply for an ERIH Direct Grant, fill out the attached form and associated required documents. Grant materials must be submitted electronically unless authorized otherwise.***

Please be sure to include any available drawings and descriptive information on the design of the project and the products to be used.

- SUBMISSION
  - Supplemental Information  
Required:
    - Budget form and any available supporting documents
    - Completed W-9 with EIN
    - Tax Year Data, showing COVID-19 impact
    - Most recent financial statements, specifically Income Statement and Balance Sheet (if applicable)
    - Project Timeline
  - Encouraged:
    - Supporting documents establishing need and/or future goals (e.g. business plan, revenue models, market studies, etc.)

- Letters of Support from relevant local partners, peer organizations and/or community organizations
- Submittal or Transmittal of submission documents
  - The electronic grant form and associated supplemental documents must be submitted electronically
  - Grants applications must be submitted to [sabrina@centralmaine.org](mailto:sabrina@centralmaine.org)
  - Non-electronic submissions will only be reviewed if previously authorized
  - The ERIH grant application may be accessed here:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/35T38LJ>
- Application Due Date
  - Grants will open May 1, 2023
  - Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis, and are contingent upon funding availability. The final date for grant applications is October 31, 2024, or until funds are fully expended. CMGC will notify grantees within 60 days of submission.

**All grant materials, program resources, and associated documentation may also be publicly viewed at: [www.centralmaine.org/economic-recovery-implementation-hub](http://www.centralmaine.org/economic-recovery-implementation-hub)**

- AWARD NOTIFICATION
  - Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Following a successful submission, CMGC staff will scan applications for eligibility. If further clarification or alteration of the proposed scope of work is necessary, CMGC staff may reach out to applicants to solicit additional documentation or schedule an informational meeting to go over the proposal.
  - At this time CMGC staff may request additional information on the proposed project and/or adjustments to the scope of work and budget.
  - Once applicants have successfully submitted all necessary documents, the Grant review committee will meet and review the application, using the scoring criteria in section VI of these guidelines.
    - We will work to provide a notice of award/decline/referral within 60 days of a completed application.
- INITIATION OF WORK & DEPLOYMENT OF FUNDS
  - Following a notice of award, awardees enter the active project phase and shall begin preparatory work (establishing policies, administrative procedures, research, etc...)
  - Funds will be deployed to grantees within 30 days of award notification.

- Once a grant recipient receives funds, project work and efforts can proceed to completion.
- **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**
  - CMGC staff will work collaboratively with awardees, providing technical assistance to identify project challenges, ideate creative solutions and support project sustainability.
  - Following award notification, formal reporting will occur every six months throughout the project performance period.
  - Once funds are fully expended and the project scope has been completed, a final closeout meeting will be held with the grantee, CMGC, and any relevant partners. A final project report will be due at this time:
    - The grantee will be required to complete a Google Data Studios Form so that CMGC may obtain metrics needed for reporting to MDECD.

## VI. SELECTION CRITERIA

<b>ERIH Direct Grants to Businesses &amp; Entrepreneurs:</b> Checklist (Incomplete applications will not be scored)	
___	Business / Entrepreneur is based in the established geographic performance area <b>(Appendix A)</b>
___	Business / Entrepreneur was established on or after January 1, 2020.
___	Submitted a complete electronic ERIH Grant Application Form with all required application materials, including proof of COVID-19 impact
___	Signed Application form by a leader of organization
___	Proposed project scope of work has alignment with the above-detailed funding goals (see section III)



### **Scoring Criteria**

Each Grant application will be scored according to the following criteria:

01. Potential economic impact in the community/region *(25 points)*
02. Negative impacts experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic *(20 points)*
03. Quality of proposed plan or project and compliance with ERIH Program Guidelines *(15 points)*
04. Jobs created and/or supported *(15 points)*
05. Financial feasibility *(15 points)*
06. Long-term value/viability/project sustainability *(10 points)*

CMGC anticipates that there will be more demand than available funds. Funding will be provided to those applications receiving the overall highest scores until the grant fund is exhausted. The ERIH Grant Selection Committee reserves the right to deny funding to any applicant who does not comply with the required or suggested guidelines. Should there be a lack of qualified applications, all remaining grant funds may not be awarded.

# APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Geographic Performance Area

APPENDIX B - Application Forms

**APPENDIX A**

Geographic performance area: ERIH Direct Grants to Businesses and Entrepreneurs

<b><i>KENNEBEC ECONOMIC SUMMARY DISTRICT</i></b>				
<b>AUGUSTA ESA</b>	<b>WATERVILLE ESA</b>	<b>SKOWHEGAN ESA</b>	<b>PITTSFIELD ESA</b>	<b>JACKMAN ESA</b>
Augusta	Albion	Anson	Burnham	Bingham
Chelsea	Belgrade	Athens	Cambridge	Brighton Plt
Coopers Mills	Benton	Canaan	Detroit	Caratunk
Farmingdale	China	Cornville	Hartland	Concord Typ
Gardiner	Clinton	Embden	Palmyra	Dennistown
Hallowell	Fairfield	Harmony	Pittsfield	Highland Plt
Hibberts Gore	Freedom	Lakewood	Ripley	Holeb
Kents Hill	Hinckley	Madison	St. Albans	Jackman
Litchfield	Oakland	Mercer		Lake Moxie
Manchester	Palermo	New Portland		Lexington Twp
Monmouth	Rome	Norridgewock		Long Pond Twp
Mount Vernon	Shawmut	Skowhegan		Moose River
Pittston	Sidney	Solon		Moscow
Randolph	Smithfield	Starks		Ogontz
Readfield	Thorndike			Pleasant Rd.
Richmond	Troy			Rockwood
Somerville	Unity			The Forks Plt
Vienna	Unity Twp			Wyman Dam
Wayne	Vassalboro			W. Forks Plt
West Gardiner	Waterville			
Whitefield	Weeks Mills			
Windsor	Winslow			
Winthrop				

**APPENDIX B**

## ERIH Grant Application form:

The Grant Application is a digital form, available on the Central Maine Growth Council Website. The application can be found in the Resources section of the webpage linked here:

<https://www.centralmaine.org/economic-recovery-implementation-hub/>

If you have trouble accessing the application, or need assistance please reach out to CMGC program staff Sabrina Jandreau [sabrina@centralmaine.org](mailto:sabrina@centralmaine.org)